



SPAS:  
TOTAL WELLNESS IN THE ITALIAN TRADITION

## SIRMIONE SPA

**Culture, wellness and relaxation come together in the breathtaking natural scenery of Sirmione, a triangular peninsula stretching out into Lake Garda**

**S**irmione is a tourist thermal centre situated along the southern coast of Lake Garda, on the elegant peninsula with the same name, separating the gulfs of Desenzano and Peschiera. It is triangular in shape with three hills: Cortine, San Pietro in Mavinas and Grotte di Catullo. More than a century ago, when it was still a small fishing village, Sirmione discovered its vocation for tourism as well as for the exploitation of the thermal waters of the Boiola spring. Important for its development, the natural beauty of the land and the mild climate combined with its historic evidences: this richness has supported the local entrepreneurs and has turned Sirmione into a leading holiday resort. Today, high quality accommodation is provided for 8000 people, in addition to restaurants, shops, sports and bathing equipment. The name of the town is also linked to the soprano Maria Callas, who spent about 10 years here. To her has been dedicated the old Town Hall (now a centre for exhibitions and other events) and a yearly interesting celebration of classic music and opera. The water qualities, the clean beaches and the exclusive hospitality have granted Sirmione the Bandiera Blu, continuously since the year 2000, also thanks to the environmental politics of the Commune in support of tourism.

## SIRMIONE HISTORY AND MONUMENTS

The Grotte di Catullo is a hill in Sirmione that preserves the remains of a Roman villa dating back to the 1st century AD. Together with other villas, it probably represented the holiday resort of high-ranking families from Verona, among which Catullo's family. The poet Catullo (87-54 BC) sang of the beauties of Sirmione and the house he owned here, in his 31st poem. In the Roman era, Sirmione was also a refreshment place for travellers in transit from Brescia to Verona, because of its location along the Via Gallica, the ancient route that through Bergamo and Brescia led to Verona. Here it joined Via Postumia, built in 148 B.C., that connected Genova to Aquileia. The Longobards themselves soon realized the strategic importance of this land, appointing Sirmione chief town of *judiciaria sermionensis*, the administrative role lost under the dominion of Carlo Magno. The finding of an ancient necropolis between the Strada delle Grotte, the Lido delle Bionde and Via Piana is another evidence of the greatness of Sirmione. Different dominations followed one another, but Sirmione always had a privileged relationship with its sovereigns, getting exemptions and special grants, such as the right of fishing all over the lake by Frederick II. It was subject to the Commune of Verona and then to the Signoria Scaligera that, at will of Mastino I della Scala, built the castle that also housed the garrison. Under the long Venetian dominion (1405-1797), Sirmione became a small quiet hamlet, inhabited by fishermen and olive growers, while in the countryside the peasants were devoted to the cultivation of the vine and the mulberry.

### ROCCA SCALIGERA

Rich in art and history, the town preserves a romantic atmosphere enhanced by the characteristic narrow streets and lanes, with little traffic. Among the churches, it is worth visiting St. Pietro in Malvino, St. Anna della Rocca, built for the garrison next to the castle in the second half of 1330, and Santa Maria Maggiore, the cathedral dating back to the end of the 15th century. At the village entrance there is the picturesque mass of the Rocca Scaligera, that immerses its walls in the lake; it was erected at the will of Mastino I della Scala, ruler of Verona, in the 13th century. The main body consists of a courtyard surrounded by four walls and three angular towers. From the second courtyard you can see the structure of the drawbridge and, through a small gate, you can go near the dockyard, in ancient times the port of the fortress.

### S. PIETRO IN MALVINO

The small church of San Pietro in Malvino rises on the hill with the same name, to which the mysterious name "in summas vineas" (among the vineyards placed on the top) might refer. This building had already been evidenced in the 8th century. Far from the built-up area, it was later turned into an isolation hospital and cemetery for the plague-victims.

### GROTTE DI CATULLO

Easily reached with a pleasant walk among the olive groves, the Grotte di Catullo is the most grandiose Roman villa in northern Italy, built in the first imperial era on a pre-existent structure perhaps of the 1st century AD. The interesting archaeological area, spectacularly overlooking a magnificent landscape, preserves various structures of the old building: the double cryptoporticus on pillars, the baths with the tepidarium, a room with a big window called "trifora del Paradiso". At the entrance of the archaeological area, there is the "Antiquarium", now become a museum, that houses documents, photographs and various decorative objects (fragments of frescoes, mosaics, ceramics, bronze objects and coins). Besides there are structures and massive stoneworks suited to support the building and placed under it. The ancient rosy stones of the villa perfectly combine with the surrounding landscape, enchanting and fascinating all the visitors.

## CATULLO AND VIRGILIO SPA

Although known since the Renaissance, Boiola, a hot and sulfurous spring welling up from the lake bed, 250 m from the eastern shore, was reached only in 1889 by the Venetian diver Procopio, equipped with a diving suit and special pumps. An important year for Sirmione was 1896, when they succeeded in canalizing and exploiting the water of this wellspring. Since the beginning of last century, the thermal activity enlarged more and more and became famous all over Europe. The water of Sirmione Spa contains a high level of sulfur, chloride, sodium, bromine and iodine dissolved in it, besides many traces of manganese, selenium and zinc, that are essential to determine useful reaction, both in medical and aesthetic fields. The mud is indicated for the treatment of muscles and skeleton disorders, while the thermal baths give benefits to the vascular disorders of the lower limbs as well as to the dermatological ones. The water of Sirmione Spa is specially suitable for diseases of the respiratory system. There are two spas: Catullo and Virgilio. Catullo Spa, located in the historic center of Sirmione, overlooks the lake. Besides any kind of treatments, it is the center for the cure of deafness. The thermal swimming pool with flowing water is a further therapeutics opportunity of Spa: hydro-massage, swimming and bathing under therapist assistance.

Situated along SS11 connecting Brescia to Verona, Virgilio Spa provides the most modern equipment for inhalant treatments, vascular and dermatological diseases, balneotherapy, mud therapy and different kinds of massage.



**Terme di Sirmione Spa**  
P.zza Virgilio, 1 - Colombare - Sirmione (BS) Tel. 030 91681

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**Stabilimento Catullo**  
P.zza D. A. Piatti, 1 - Sirmione (BS)- Tel. 030 9904923

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**Stabilimento Virgilio**  
P.zza Virgilio, 1 - Colombare - Sirmione (BS)- Tel. 030 9904923

## **THE SURROUNDINGS**

### **THE PARKS**

There are various parks around Sirmione. Adults and children can spend unforgettable moments immersed in the greenness of Parco Sicurtà at Valeggio sul Mincio (Tel. 045 6371033) and Parco Natura Viva between Bussolengo and Pastrengo (Tel. 045 7170052), both at about 20 minutes drive from Sirmione, or get emotions by visiting Gardaland park at Castelnuovo (Tel. 045 6449777) and the aquatic park Canevaworld at Lazise (Tel. 045 7590622 - 7590633).

### **DESENZANO DEL GARDA**

Desenzano del Garda, lying on the morainic hills that limit the lake at South-West, is a touristic village with an attractive lakefront and an old port, surrounded by the characteristic buildings, some of which in Venetian style. We recommend a visit to the old Palazzo Comunale (1580) and Palazzo del Provveditore (1585), both by Giulio Todeschini, and the Duomo dedicated to Santa Maria Maddalena, housing a significant Last Supper by Giambattista Tiepolo (1738). The upper side of Desenzano is represented by the medieval area of Capo la Terra, around the early medieval castle, rebuilt between 1300 and 1400 and reworked by the Austrians. Also in Desenzano there are the ruins of a Roman villa, placed at the foot of a hilly slope and within a few meters from the beach. It consists of two different building stages: the most remarkable goes back to the 4th century and some remains to the 1st and 2nd centuries. The Antiquarium exhibits findings from excavations, such as fragments of statues and portraits and a mill for olive and grape pressing.

### **PESCHIERA DEL GARDA**

Peschiera overlooks Lake Garda northwards and is the starting point of the River Mincio, the lake's outlet. The construction of the walled town of Peschiera, surrounded by water, modified the natural course of the river. To grant the defense of the town, three exit points from the lake, that join together at the south of the built-up area, have been created. The historical center preserves most part of the massive defensive walls, built between 1553 and 1556 according to a project of Guidobaldo della Rovere. Also to be mentioned the Palazzina Comando del Presidio, where the retreat of the Italian troops within the Piave line was decided in September 1917. A place of worship, to be visited, is the Parish Church of St. Martino of the 18th century, built on the site of a pagan temple and completely frescoed.

## **SPORTS AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES**

Sirmione is the ideal setting to spend sports or relaxing holidays as well as cultural and artistic activities. It is the capital of aquatic sports, as evidenced by the various sailing races and championships such as the Cento Miglia Velica. There are many schools of windsurfing and various tennis courts both at Sirmione and in the neighbouring villages. Ideal land for horse-riding, its hinterland provides landscapes and routes immersed in the beauties of nature. If you are interested in long excursions or also taking riding lessons, you simply have to go to one of the twenty-five riding grounds of the territory. Lake Garda is also a suitable region for canyoning, trekking, climbing and cycling, activities that also offer the opportunity to know the splendid hinterland in the most natural way. Even golf lovers can find wonderful greens in the surroundings. And after a day of sport, you can relax at the spa

### *Cuisine*

### **LEMONS AND CITRONS OF LAKE GARDA**

Lemons and citrons of Lake Garda are produced in the districts of Gardone Riviera, Toscolano Maderno, Tignale and Limone. The recent custom of returning to ancient flavors and old crafts, is providing the restoration of old greenhouses. In this way an important heritage of structures and local culture can be preserved and exploited.

**You can visit:**

■ **LA LIMONAIA DEL PRÀ DELA FAM**

Porto di Tignale  
Tel. 0365 71449

■ **LA LIMONAIA DEL CASTEL**

Limone del Garda  
Tel. 0365 918987

***Getting to Sirmione***

**In auto:** autostrada A4 Milano-Venezia, uscita Desenzano; autostrada A22 del Brennero, uscita Affi; SPBS 45-bis Gardesana Occidentale; SPBS 11 Brescia-Desenzano. Dalla sponda veronese servizio di traghetto da Torri del Benaco.

**In treno:** linea ferroviaria Milano-Venezia, stazione di Desenzano.

**In aereo:** aeroporto Milano - Orio al Serio; aeroporto Brescia; aeroporto Verona

**In Pulman:** servizio garantito dalle autolinee SAIA da Brescia e dalla stazione di Desenzano - Biglietteria: tel. 030/44915 - Call Centre: tel. 840620001

In **Battello:** servizio garantito dalla società Gestione Navigazione Laghi - tel. 030/9149511.